

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 308864
ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 R

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R 220035Z DEC 76

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

INFO CINCPAC

S E C R E T STATE 308864

EXDIS, MILITARY ADDRESSEES HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, PFOR, SN, US

SUBJECT: P-3 FLIGHTS THROUGH SINGAPORE

REF: A. SINGAPORE 5521; B. STATE 276094; C. STATE 184189.

1. WE ARE CONCERNED BY DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER GOH'S CONTINUING TENDENCY TO HARK BACK TO THE COST OF LAST SPRING'S COUNTERINSURGENCY COURSE AND HIS LINKING OF THE ISSUE WITH THE STAGING OF P-3S THROUGH SINGAPORE. WE HAD EXPECTED THAT THE ISSUE WOULD BE LARGELY LAID TO REST BY OUR SUBSEQUENT MOVES TO HELP THE GOS WITH VARIOUS OF ITS SECURITY PROBLEMS, MOST ESPECIALLY OUR OFFER TO SELL THE TWO C-130S AT A COST FAR BELOW THE COST OF THE NEW AIRCRAFT AND AT A SAVINGS TO THE GOS MANY TIMES GREATER THAN THE
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"EXCESSIVE" COST OF THE COUNTERINSURGENCY COURSE. WE FEEL THAT GOH'S PENCHANT FOR RESURRECTING THE ISSUE IS REACHING THE POINT OF BECOMING SOMEWHAT COUNTERPRODUCTIVE.

2. WE HAVE NOTED YOUR COMMENTS REGARDING GOH'S POSSIBLE MOTIVE IN CONTINUING TO HARP ON THIS ISSUE (PARA 5, REF A).

IN THIS CONNECTION, WE WONDER HOW MUCH GOH ACTUALLY IS REFLECTING PRIME MINISTER LEE'S VIEWS AND HOW MUCH HE MAY BE PROJECTING HIS OWN CONCERNS AS DEFENSE MINISTER IN MEETING THE PROBLEM OF FINANCING SINGAPORE'S INTENDED MILITARY PROCUREMENT. WE THEREFORE HOPE YOU CAN FIND A SUITABLE OPPORTUNITY TO SOUND OUT LEE HIMSELF ON HIS CURRENT THINKING WITH REGARD TO P-3 STAGING. IF HE DOES, IN FACT, INTEND TO SEEK QUID PRO QUO IN FORM OF CONCESSIONAL ARMS PURCHASES, THIS WOULD PRESENT A REAL PROBLEM GIVEN SINGAPORE'S RELATIVE AFFLUENCE. IF LEE WERE TO RAISE HIS CONGRESSIONAL CONCERNS, YOU SHOULD MENTION OUR THOUGHTS REGARDING HIS SCENARIO FOR CONGRESSIONAL ENDORSEMENT OF P-3 TRANSIT ARRANGEMENTS AS SET FORTH LAST SENTENCE PARA 2, REF B.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SURVEILLANCE, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, OVERFLIGHT AGREEMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: greeneet
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE308864
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: WSSHEPARD:ECINGRAHAM:LGR
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760469-0285
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761220/aaaaaqwy.tel
Line Count: 76
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 76 SINGAPORE 5521, 76 STATE 276094, 76 STATE 184189
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: greeneet
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <03 JUN 2004 by ifshinsr>; APPROVED <23 SEP 2004 by greeneet>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: P-3 FLIGHTS THROUGH SINGAPORE
TAGS: MASS, PFOR, SN, US
To: SINGAPORE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006